

Statement from Mayor Andre Sayegh
Response to Paterson Press re TimeTrak, HR

As you know, I have assembled an all-star team of native Patersonians and others who are respected by the community and in their fields of discipline. Arguably, this is the best collection of talent that the City has seen in many years. We still have a long way to go, but results speak for themselves. In a few short months, we have switched to the SHBP; sold the Armory and will soon close the deal; started the LSRP process for Leader Dye; advanced plans to secure all \$130 in EDA ERG tax credits; added another hot spot to the commercial curfew ordinance; helped a business secure a cannabis license for Paterson that will lead to hundreds of jobs, etc. The list goes on. My team doesn't just punch a clock; we all go above and beyond our 35 hours a week to make this progress happen.

I am aware of a 2015 memorandum from then Personnel Director Abby Levenson to Department Directors reiterating that all "nonexempt" employees should accurately record their time through a biometrics screening system referred to as TimeTrak. (See attached). Non-exempt employees are those employees entitled to minimum wage and overtime pay as described in the Fair Labor Standards Act. Neither I nor my department heads are non-exempt employees, but we are still accountable for our time. We are "exempt" employees, meaning that because of our positions, duties, responsibilities and decision making authority, we are not eligible for overtime or compensatory time. In other words, the department heads and I earn the same wage whether we work 70 hours or 170 hours in a pay period. Since July 1, 2018, I have never used TimeTrak, and I'm not aware of any other Chief Executive in Paterson or around the State who does. I also don't recall using TimeTrak as a Councilman in all my years on the Council as an exempt, part-time employee.

I understand that my professional staff has not consistently used TimeTrak to record hours worked for several reasons. First, the memorandum is ostensibly directed to all "non-exempt" employees subject to over-time, not professional staff that is exempt. Second, professional staff manually record their time departmental timesheets that are verified before their submission to payroll. Lastly, there have been technical issues with TimeTrak at various times and locations which have frustrated users. I am asking the Personnel Director to draft a new policy that will make it abundantly clear how all employees – exempt and nonexempt – should record their time.

Notwithstanding, I also want to make it abundantly clear that all my professionals are accountable for their time and are delivering results for Paterson in excess of their salaries. I and my department heads are on-call 24 hours a day and 7 days per week, and we often work after hours each day and for hours on the weekend to manage the City without earning overtime or other compensatory time. TimeTrak doesn't and cannot capture that time or hours worked from locations outside of Paterson, which can often be the case. With the below market salaries set by City Ordinance, it's admirable that some have joined the City and taken substantial pay cuts while others have stayed and continue to perform despite the below market wages.

I treat everyone on my team with dignity and respect, like the professionals they are. When a senior leader gets the flu just as they start a new job, I let them take a sick day, because I know they will be going above and beyond in the performance of their duties. It's the human thing to do. When another has to work from home at the last minute because of a child care or family issue, we are grateful they are still able to perform their duties and contribute, even from another location. We live in a modern society, where technology developments keep us ever connected in a global workplace. I couldn't be more proud of my team and the results of these past seven months.